

“Three notices: Anthony, Edwards & Co., Mr. Plumbe” March 1845

(keywords: Edward Anthony, Jonas M. Edwards, John Plumbe, Jr., history of the daguerreotype, history of photography)

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New York Herald (daily) 11:73 (15 March 1845): n.p. (fourth page); 11:74 (16 March 1845): n.p. (second page); 11:74 (19 March 1845): n.p. (fifth page).

[*New York Herald* 11:73 (15 March 1845): n.p. (fourth page). This text also appears in the weekly edition of the same day: 10:11 (15 March 1845): 83.]

BY THE SOUTHERN MAIL

Washington.

(Correspondence of the Herald)

WASHINGTON, Thursday, 13th March, 1845

During the past session I have frequently admired some most exquisite specimens of daguerreotype likenesses, which were placed in the lobby of the House of Representatives, and extorted unqualified approbation from all who saw them. If the improvements which have been accomplished in the method of taking likenesses be regarded as any indication of what will be effected hereafter, the avocation of the miniature painter must soon become worthless, or altogether incorporated with the often abused and misused daguerreotype. Having taken occasion to visit the rooms in the Capitol occupied for several sessions past by Messrs. Anthony, Edwards & Co. of New York, and whose production the likenesses above referred to were. I find that their latest pictures are more beautiful still, and feel convinced that the prejudice existing against this elegant and sure method of taking likenesses (not daubs) must be owing entirely to so many incompetent persons being engaged in it, and if the public would only take the trouble to see for themselves, they would be convinced that it is in reality an infinitely preferable mode of having a likeness taken to the old method of painting, to which so many daubs now hanging upon in various rooms, owe their existence. Messrs. A. E. & Co. have passed several winters here taking likenesses to add to the “national miniature gallery,” and as there are many person in New York who have every desire to see the legislators of the country, who have made their names famous, I advise them to visit this gallery at their rooms, 247 Broadway, where they have portraits now of upwards of 500 of the most distinguished men of the nation, having taken in this city and forwarded to New York during the last session, upwards of 100 likenesses, including most faithful and beautiful ones of Mr. and Mrs. Polk. As, too, this exhibition has been collected at great expense on the part of the proprietors who charge nothing for admission, the public should be made aware of what a treat there is in store for them. From the pictures in this gallery, a splendid mezzotint of forty inches by thirty-two, is being engraved in New York, being a representation of the Senate in 1842 on the occasion of Henry Clay’s farewell address, which of course will please every one, as Mr. C. is now politically dead.

It is but just to say, that in all the daguerreotypes which I have seen in the principal cities of the Union, I have seen none which can compare with Messrs. Anthony, Edwards & Co., who, confining their operations to New York and this city, are enabled to give their personal attention to every thing emanating from their establishment. Those who want to judge will go to their gallery, and see Congressmen, Senators, Governors, Presidents, &c. &c., to the end of the chapter.

[*New York Herald* 11:74 (16 March 1845): n.p. (second page).]

DAGUERREOTYPES.—Our Washington correspondent in his letter of yesterday makes a long notice of the daguerreotype establishment of Anthony, Edwards, & Co. We dissent, in a great measure, from the encomiums uttered by our correspondent on those artists. No doubt they are very good in their way, but we believe that Mr. Plumbe is without a rival in this department of art. The talents and success of that gentleman in taking likenesses by this extraordinary and interesting process, are well known to us. We have been no inattentive observers of the progress of this novel art, and we are free to say, from what we have seen and personally examined, that Mr. Plumbe, who is now in Washington, and has an establishment in this city, has succeeded in this art so as to surpass all others in the line in this country. We do not speak at random. Our Washington correspondent is unjust in his eulogies of Anthony, Edwards & Co., at the expense of Mr. Plumbe, and we request him to step into Mr. Plumbe's gallery, at Washington, and give a full and correct account of the admirable likenesses and successful hits which are to be seen there,

[*New York Herald* 11:77 (19 March 1845): n.p. (fifth page).]

BY THE SOUTHERN MAIL
Washington.
(Correspondence of the Herald)

WASHINGTON, March 17, 1845

It gives me pleasure to comply with your request to visit Mr. Plumbe's gallery of daguerreotype miniatures, and give a description thereof. First, I must say that in my remarks respecting Messrs Anthony Edwards and Co.'s establishment, I had no intention of being unjust to Mr. Plumbe, for my remarks were only a tribute which I felt to be due to the merits of the former gentlemen, as displayed in the miniatures which I had seen. Having now, however, visited Mr. Plumbe's gallery, I must withdraw the assertion that I have not seen Daguerreotypes which will compare with theirs; for in Mr. Plumbe's gallery I have found such, though I certainly have not found them elsewhere, and I doubt not, if I were to visit Mr. P's gallery in New York, 251 Broadway, I should find many more. Messrs A. E. and Co. have the advantage of Mr. Plumbe, in that their rooms are in the Capitol itself, while Mr. P is obliged to be content with rooms on the avenue, and to those in the constant habit of attending the Capitol, those of the former gentlemen are continually presented to their notice, and consequently attract more attention. I found Mr. Plumbe to be a most polite, attentive, and gentlemanly person, willing and anxious to afford every convenience to his visitors, and I had but just to cast my eyes on the walls where hang up his miniatures, to recognize many portraits most admirably and faithfully

representing various individuals well known to fame, and whose portraits, as here preserved, will be valuable to posterity. Among those I readily recognised, was that of the “Napoleon of the Press,” and some other members of his family; also those of Ex-President Tyler, with his famous nose, Miss Gardner, his wife’s sister, John Tyler, Ex-Private Secretary; Mordecai M. Noah, Ex-Judge of the Court of Sessions, N. Y.; President Polk, Mrs. Polk, Vice President George M. Dallas, with a number of others, members of Congress, delegates from territories, Senators, Governors, and others, who have not yet attained to such high distinctions. In a conversation with Mr. Plumbe, he informed me that very great and rapid advances and improvements have been made to his beautiful art. When he first commenced taking likenesses by means of the Daguerreotype, it was necessary to have the sun shining on the face of the subject, and that they should sit perfectly still for a space of from two to five minutes, to take a good impression. Now the time required is not more than from thirty to fifty seconds, and they can dispense with the sun altogether; indeed they never take a likeness at all with the sun shining on the person; and while the former long-continued sitting gave a very harsh and unpleasant character to the likeness, there was not any mode known of applying coloring, though now the art of coloring these likenesses has been discovered, so that they far surpass the effect produced by a miniature painting, while the expense is not near so great. All this convinces me more and more that with the vast improvements in taking and coloring Daguerreotypes which have been made, as shown by these galleries, the art of miniature painting must become of secondary importance to it; and when the superiority of the former in point of accuracy in resemblance, together with the beauty of tints which has been attained is considered, it is surprising that it has not come into more general use, when it would, were it not for the many persons who, so that they pocket the dollars, care not for the art or the discredit which they may bring upon it by abusing it, and turning out Daguerreotypes which have hardly any claim to the title at all, beyond that they are the result of the process, carelessly performed. I perceive that Mr. Plumbe’s gallery is close adjoining Messrs. A. E. & Co., and I would recommend all, who have been induced by my reference to them to visit their establishment, also to visit Mr. P’s—the one is 247 and the other 251 Broadway—they will then receive a delight in viewing the triumphs of this art which they will regret that they have permitted so long to escape their notice; and I am mistaken if they be not induced, by the beauty of the likenesses, to desire to preserve a faithful *fac smile* of themselves to be taken by this only sure method.

[End of texts.]

EDITOR’S NOTES:

Additional information regarding Edward Anthony is found in William Marder and Estelle Marder, *Anthony: the Man the Company the Cameras* (Plantation: Pine Ridge Publishing Co., 1982). See also C. Edwards Lester, “The Origin and Progress of the Daguerreian Art,” *Fly Leaf of Art and Criticism* (New York) No. 8 ([August] 1850): n.p.¹

The Thomas Doney engraving, “United States Senate Chamber,” is viewable on the Library of Congress web site, *Prints & Photographs Online Catalogue*.²

Further information regarding Plumbe is found in John Hannavy, edit., *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography* vol. 2, (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2008): 1138–9; Davis Hudson and Marvin Bergman, *The Biographical Dictionary of Iowa* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2008).

1. http://www.daguerreotypearchive.org/texts/P8500003_LESTER_DAG-ART_GIA_1850-08.pdf
2. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ppmsca.08980>

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